

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIEP-01 COME-00 FPC-01 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSC-05

OMB-01 PM-04 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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POUCHED INFO ALL CANADIAN CONSULS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, ENRG, CA

SUBJ: BEAUFORT SEA

1. DOUGLAS HILL, USA DIVISION, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, SUMMONED
EMBOFF TODAY TO PRESENT FOLLOWING NOTE ON BEAUFORT SEA
WHICH IS IN RESPONSE TO EMBASSY NOTE NO. 27 ON SAME
SUBJECT:

BEGIN TEXT -

THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS PRESENTS ITS
COMPLIMENTS TO THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY AND HAS THE
HONOUR TO REFER TO THE EMBASSY'S NOTE OF FEBRUARY 14, 1976,
CONCERNING PROPOSED EXPLORATORY DRILLING FOR OIL AND GAS
OFF THE CANADIAN COAST IN THE OPEN WATERS OF THE SOUTHERN
BEAUFORT SEA. THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE NOTED WITH
SATISFACTION THAT AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE HAS BEEN REACHED
THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES PROCEED WITH AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS
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ON THE GENERAL QUESTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

OF OFF-SHORE DRILLING FOR OIL AND GAS IN ARCTIC WATERS.

THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES ALSO WELCOME THE UNITED STATES PROPOSAL TO DISCUSS THE UTILITY OF CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR DEALING WITH OIL SPILLS IN ARCTIC WATERS ALONG THE LINES OF SIMILAR ARRANGEMENTS ALREADY CONCLUDED OR UNDER DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IN OTHER AREAS. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES ARE FULLY PREPARED TO DISCUSS HOW APPROPRIATE REMEDIAL MEASURES MIGHT BE MOUNTED IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF AN OIL SPILL IN ARCTIC WATERS WHICH MIGHT THREATEN ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE TO BOTH COUNTRIES.

THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE CAREFULLY NOTED THE UNITED STATES REQUEST THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA NOT CONSIDER GRANTING AUTHORIZATION FOR OFF-SHORE DRILLING IN THE OPEN WATERS OF THE BEAUFORT SEA UNTIL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND UNTIL THE UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DRILLING IN THE SUMMER OF 1976. THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES WOULD IN PRINCIPLE WELCOME CONSULTATIONS ON THE CLEAR UNDERSTANDING THAT, SINCE APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE FOR EXPLORATORY OFF-SHORE DRILLING IN THE BEAUFORT SEA WAS GIVEN IN 1973, SUCH CONSULTATIONS WOULD BE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO ANY EVENTUAL DECISION BY THE GOVERNMENT WITH RESPECT TO BEAUFORT SEA DRILLING APPLICATIONS UNDER PRESENT OR FUTURE CONSIDERATION.

HOWEVER, THE DEPARTMENT WISHES TO EMPHASIZE THAT THERE IS A VERY PRESSING TIME FRAME WITH RESPECT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A DECISION ON THE DRILLING ENVISAGED IN THE SUMMER OF 1976. DECISIONS IN THIS REGARD MUST BE TAKEN IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE THAT CONSULTATIONS AT A SENIOR LEVEL TAKE PLACE IN OTTAWA AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE WEEK OF MARCH 1. PROPOSED DATES, IN ORDER OF CANADIAN PREFERENCE, WOULD BE THE MORNINGS OF MARCH 2, MARCH 1 AND MARCH 3 RESPECTIVELY. WHILE IT IS APPRECIATED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT THIS WILL NOT PROVIDE A FULL OPPORTUNITY FOR REVIEW OF ALL THE RELEVANT TECHNICAL STUDIES WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSED 1976 DRILLING, THE DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THAT THESE CONSULTATIONS WOULD PERMIT A PRELIMINARY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF EXPLORATORY DRILLING IN THE BEAUFORT SEA, WITH A VIEW TO SETTING IN TRAIN A PROGRAM TO PERMIT MORE DETAILED EXCHANGES AT A TECHNICAL LEVEL

AT A LATER DATE. ON THE CANADIAN SIDE, IT IS ENVISAGED THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENT WILL PARTICIPATE, PROBABLY AT DEPUTY MINISTER LEVEL. TO FACILITATE THE DISCUSSIONS, THE DEPARTMENT IS PLEASED TO FORWARD ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL, INCLUDING THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR THE PROPOSED 1976 DRILLING ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS THE APPLICATION BY CANADIAN MARINE DRILLING LIMITED FOR FINAL DRILLING AUTHORITY TOGETHER WITH SUPPORTING BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS TAKES THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY TO THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY THE ASSURANCES OF ITS HIGHEST CONSIDERATION. END TEXT

2. IN PRESENTING NOTE, HILL COMMENTED THAT SHORT TIME FRAME CREATED A DIFFICULT SITUATION BUT SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS ANY DESIRE ON THE PART OF GOC TO GIVE SHORT SHRIFT TO BEAUFORT SEA PROBLEM, AND HE HOPED THIS WOULD BE THE BEGINNING OF EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION BETWEEN BOTH GOVERNMENTS.

3. HILL ALSO PROVIDED SEVERAL THICK VOLUMES OF BACKGROUND MATERIAL WHICH WILL BE FORWARDED TO DEPARTMENT IN MOST RAPID WAY POSSIBLE.
ENDERS

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